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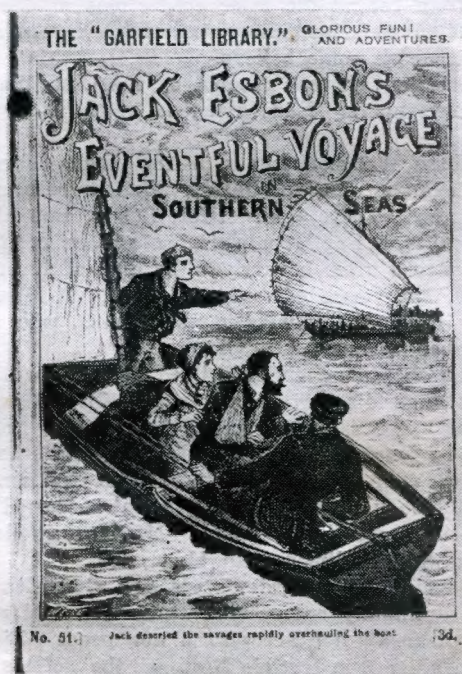
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By Robert Sampson



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Jesse James' Ferocious Exploits; or, Piping the Terrible Outlaw, in The Adventure Series

By Robert Sampson

The ghost of Jesse James still whispers at the back of the American mind. It is a national ghost, one of those terrible phantoms that will not leave us.

These are not traditional ghosts. They do not posture in the dark, their eye sockets flaring with Hell's light. Our ghosts are more circumspect. They haunt the stuff of history and, consequently, our minds.

John Henry persists, and Geronimo, Jim Bridger and fierce Mike Fink, and Jesse James. When the man died and was snugly buried away, his ghost endured in a haze of stories passed casually down the generations. Night songs sustained it. A line of doggeral continued it. Nothing as complex as a ghost fades easily, and these ghosts continue to stare out at you, unspeakably violent, from behind the tame confections of the present.

They are ghosts of the American mind, which is stiffened by the past and not nearly as tame as some believe.

Jesse James persists. He was created by the Civil War, made a household name by the newspapers. Made a legend by the story papers and dime novels.

He was born Jesse Woodson James in 1847, being three years younger than his brother, Alexander Franklin James. Both were born in Clay County, Missouri, near Kearney. There their sister, Susan, was also born in 1849.

In 1851, their father, a Baptist minister, joined the rush to the California gold fields. Three weeks after he arrived, he died of fever. His wife, Zerelda Lindsay James, had remained with the family in Missouri. She would marry twice again—first to a farmer named Simms, who swiftly died, and, in 1857, to Dr. Reuben Samuel.

The Samuels and the James children lived at a difficult time in that difficult place, the Kansas-Missouri border area. Civil War passions raged. Bands of armed men, professing allegiance to one side or the other, or no allegiance to anything roamed and murdered. The James boys, strongly Confederate in sympathy, were drawn into the orbit of William Quantrill. They became part of that bloody guerrilla struggle that seesawed through the border lands, one atrocity capped by a worse. Madness, intolerance, hatred intermingled, a black thicket slimed with blood.

The Civil War ended. The border raids and struggles did not. Known Confederates were continually harrassed. Those who had ridden with Quantrill found neither amnesty nor acceptance nor peace. Lincoln had wished to bind up the wounds. But in terrible Missouri, the wounds stank and rotted.

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The James boys faced an implacable society that would not forgive or forget. Before that society, they could do little right. Why then, defy the Union sympathizers, the militia, the night riders, the gouging banks, the hated judicial paraphernalia of the conquerors.

Is it wrong to smite the oppressors?

Or perhaps these politically charged sentiments merely obscure the darker truth that armed robbery is exciting and stimulates the heart and is occasionally profitable. It is also a one-way road. But you don't learn that til later.

Whatever the cause, the legends began building in 1866. The bank at Liberty, Missouri, was robbed. Maybe Jesse and Frank were involved. Maybe not. More crimes were credited to the James boys than they ever committed. But implicated or not, their legend begins at Liberty, on Valentine's Day.

Thereafter, a long series of bank robberies. In July 1873, they began to attack trains. The Rock Island and Pacific was derailed fourteen miles out of Council Bluffs, Iowa, and the James boys got the credit, deserved or not.

Came 1874, a fateful year. Jesse married his cousin, Zerelda Mimms; the marriage would last until his death and produce five children, two of them surviving. And late in that year began the famous James struggle with the Pinkerton Detective Agency.

Allan Pinkerton had dispatched one of his top operatives, J. W. Whicher, to Missouri to capture the James boys. Whicher was speedily killed, shot in the head and heart. The Pinkerton Agency reacted with violence. Only a few weeks later, January 1875, they surrounded the Samuel home and, with incredible folly, hurled an explosive 32-pound shell, wrapped in blazing rags, through the window. The shell detonated, killing Jesse's young half brother, Archie, and severing Mrs. Samuel's right arm below the elbow.(1)

That explosion blasted away any possibility that the James boys would become reconciled with society. From this period on, their record is a string of robberies, culminating in the gang's bloody repulse at Northfield, Minnesota. (The three Younger brothers, wounded, were captured and sentenced to life imprisonment in the Minnesota State Penitentiary.)(2)

After Northfield, the James boys rode west, dropped into Texas and Mexico. Returned, crime by crime, through Nebraska, Missouri, Iowa, Kentucky. At length, all adventures ended. In 1882, Jesse was shot by Bob Ford in St. Joseph, Missouri. At the time of his death, he was thirty-five.

Frank lived to surrender. He was tried, eventually freed because of lack of evidence. Later he was briefly involved in Wild West shows, ranched in Oklahoma, died in 1915. His mother, tough one-armed Zerelda, died four years earlier.

Jesse James, Jr., rising above his father's legend, became a respected lawyer in Kansas City until his death in 1951.(3)

So much for the bones of the James boys legend.

Upon this rich material, the dime novelists pounced rejoicing. While Jesse still roamed about uncaught, he became a fictional character. His raging adventures burst forth in the "Wide Awake Library" and the "New York Detective Library." He faced Old Sleuth and Old King Brady. His exploits flamed in the "Log Cabin Library" and the "James Boys Weekly" and "Jesse James Stories."

For fifteen years, the James gang raged through a complexity of titles. They were reprinted and again reprinted. New stories were added to do ser-

ies. It was fiction almost entirely, with an occasional pin prick of fact inserted to leaven the dough.

The James Boys were ferocious killers. Or Robin Hoods, fine men driven to crime by the Pinkertons. Or merciless blackguards, thirsting for blood.

But historical accuracy was not required. Mention the Glendale train, the Northfield raid, the Gallatin murder. About the name erect a glimmering bubble of fantasy. No matter. Readers sought wild escapes and reeling action. Pounding chases, the flare of guns by night. The sprawl of bodies in Missouri backwoods. These delights, readers received in abundance.

Until 1903. At that time, Street & Smith (publishers of "Jesse James Stories") and Tousey (publisher of the "James Boys Weekly") agreed to terminate the Jesse James adventures.(4) For about five years, as best we can tell, no new material was published. Then appeared a square little paperback book, "The James Boys of Old Missouri, and Their Outlaw Band of Border Bandits" (1907). This was the second volume of "The Adventure Series" published by the Arthur Westbrook Company of Cleveland, Ohio. The author was said to be William Ward, a mellifluous name of suspect reality.

From this volume, a new Jesse James series grew—thirty-five novels, Nos. 9 through 43 in "The Adventure Series." Five years after the James spectre had been banished, it returned, newly outfitted with flaming guns and Bowie knives, giving death death death.

The Westbrook "Adventure Series" books were pocket-sized paperbacks of about 180 pages, containing 16 to 22 chapters. They were decorated with color covers—deep muddy blues, accented by red and yellow, having large patches of white often integrated into the design. On these covers, in archaic line drawings, bearded men pistol the heads of their victims. Or they ride horses very fast. Or glower fiercely out at you. The only interior illustration was an ill-drawn frontispiece; this depicted a lesser scene from the story and rarely got all figures in the same proportion.

The novels, themselves, seem to have been written between 1908 and 1910. They were as coolly cynical an exploitation of the subject as anything seen in our own wicked times. In these pages, the bandits were manly figures, quick witted and competent. Their ways were rough, it's true, their actions lethal. But that was because they were hounded by posses and detectives and other bandit bands of reprehensible moral fiber, hateful representatives of law and order who refused to allow the James Boys to do what they wanted, when they wanted to.

Crime is horrible; tell us more.

In the telling, the stories used every technical narrative element developed by generations of dime novels, action beginnings, suspense books at chapter's end, dual story lines, methodically introduced scenes of attack and chase, capture and escape. Through the pages elbowed colorful characters, drawn one molecule deep and one trait wide. The well-seasoned devices of sensational literature were packed into the story—from secret doors and passages to mysterious caverns and chests of treasure. Narrative movement never slackened. The posse forever pursued, Winchester cocked. The foaming horses forever strained up one more hill. It was continuous danger, continuous combat, continuous murder.

And, as an added enticement to the jaded reader, most stories included scenes of torture and mutilation, lovingly described, slice by slice.

The crimson trail began with Adventure Series #9, "Jesse James' Dash for Fortune; or, The Raid on the Kansas City Fair." The action opens at a two-story cabin in the Missouri outback. There live the James Boys' moth-

er, their sister Susie, their half-brother Johnny, and their step-father, Dr. Samuels.(5)

Jesse and Frank have slipped in to visit their dear old mother, who is one of the tougher examples of border femininity. She suggests that they consider all that cash stacked around the Kansas City Fair.

For an elderly, respectable lady, Mrs. Samuels has a lot of unique ideas. In a later volume, she will suggest that the boys look into train robbing. She is not your average mother.

Full of plans for the Fair, the boys ride off to meet the Youngers. They ride to adventure which, in these books, is never more distant than the next page. In this instance, it is a string of eight adventures, each two or three chapters long.

Adventure 1: They discover and foil a posse led by detective Con Morley. (He will be a recurring character, lumpishly eager to catch them James Boys somehow.) Morley vows to catch Jesse singlehanded, but is himself captured and humiliated.

Adventure 2: Jesse and Bob Younger go swimming and are trapped by a man with a shotgun. He gets dispatched.

Adventure 3: They are attacked by Black Riders—a sort of vigilante pack—and clean their clocks after a bitter struggle.

Adventure 4: Jesse finds a woman murdered in a field. She has been horribly mutilated. In disguise, he joins forces with Con Morley to track the killer down. Once the killer is discovered, Jesse spirits him away and buries him in an ant hill.

Adventure 5: In an old cabin, the gang discovers a hidden watcher. Is he a detective? Jesse thinks not. (This is the only event that has plot strands more than two chapters long.)

Adventure 6: They evade a posse.

Adventure 7: Frank meets a pair of pretty girls and invites himself to their barbecue. There he is recognized and chased, but one of the girls helps him escape.

Adventure 8: Jesse goes to case the Fair and gets involved in a horse race with a tricky Texan. He escapes being captured through the aid of the fellow discovered in Adventure 5.

After all this activity, it is now time for the central crime. Jesse snatches the Fair's cash box as it is being transferred and gets \$10,000.

This loose narrative structure, rattling like marbles in a box, will be used in most stories of the series. First, the crime that gives its title to the book will be mentioned. There follows a stream of more or less disassociated parts. The outlaws are menaced and chased and trapped. Jesse extracts his gang by a clever trick, after which the pursuers are shot to flinders. Then the whole process is repeated.

After 170 pages of random blood and death, you arrive at Chapter XX. In this, the title crime is committed. It is followed by a brief Chapter XXI: "Conclusion," in which the loot is counted and the burial details get to work.

Even so, early in the series, you have the feeling that something distressing has happened to the chronology. You are correct. The bulk of the series appears built around specific crimes of the James Boys—or those credited to them, about the same thing.

No. 12: "Jesse James' Greatest Haul; or, The Daylight Robbery of the Russellville Bank."

No. 18: "Jesse James' Desperate Game; or, The Robbery of the Ste. Genevieve Bank."

No. 21: "Jesse James, Gentleman; or, The Hold-Up of the Mammoth Cave Stage."

The internal continuity of the series runs directly from No. 9 through No. 43. This is an entirely artificial continuity, imposed by art. The crimes that are so convincingly sequenced actually occurred at widely separated dates. The scrambling of the actual historical record is total.

Volume 9 combines the caught-while-swimming episode (Summer 1870) with the Kansas City Fair robbery (1873). No. 12, the Russellville Bank robbery, occurred in 1868. No. 14, the hold-up of the Chicago and Alton train, was in 1879. No. 15, recounting the murder of Pinkerton Whicher, was in 1874. No. 18, the robbery of the Ste. Genevieve bank in 1873, is followed by the Northfield raid (No. 19. 1876), the Mammoth Cave stage (No. 21, 1880), the Rock Island train robbery (No. 23, 1873), and the Gallatin Bank robbery (No. 24, 1869).

The chronology is further addled by the liberal introduction of stories of pure fiction—as opposed to stories 96% fiction. These include a struggle against a San Francisco tong and its murderous gorilla (No. 22), some difficulty with a woman detective (No. 36), and a legacy Jesse must claim in person (No. 39).

You can read this series with pleasure. But it will force you to reset all your historical clocks.

Through all this muddle strides the glorious figure of Jesse James.

Tall, broad-shouldered, his face was clean and well cut, his eyes were merry, his manners pleasant and attractive and there was nothing about him to suggest the awful devilry which underlay his natural reticence, for only when his anger was roused or when the blood-lust was upon him did he display those characteristics, the scowling brow, the clinched jaw, the snapping eyes, the black expression, the loud and terrible oaths that the popular mind has assigned to all outlaws.(6)

According to a WANTED poster, offering \$50,000 "FOR THE BODY OF JESSE JAMES, DEAD OR ALIVE!" he has "curly black hair, smooth face, shifting eyes, large mouth, 5 feet 11 inches tall, weight about 170 pounds." The same poster described his horse, Satan, as being coal black with glossy skin, 15.5 hands high.(7)

Jesse regards his situation as a wanted criminal with considerable bitterness:

"Mine is a name both hated and feared throughout this broad country. I offer no apologies for this statement. I am simply stating a fact. . . . And what is more, a price that some would consider was equal to a king's ransom has been placed upon my head. I am hunted like a wild beast both by day and by night. I am an outcast on the face of the earth, and if ever the impulse to be other than I am has been stirred in my breast it has been almost instantly crushed by the men who in the name of the law have sought my life."

Well, it was all the fault of the posses and the Pinkertons, chasing around after poor Jesse, lusting for that \$50,000. You get a bad name and you get your description on a reward poster, you and your horse, and the backwoods is thick with fellows waiting to back-shoot you. Or to creep up to the Samuels' cabin and peer through the window. Or insult your mother and sister. A man could get driven to crime that way. People never let him alone.

In his book on "The Dime Novel Western," Daryl Jones remarks:

It is nearly impossible to overestimate the importance of conventional persecution and revenge as a means of justifying the outlaw's rebellion against established social and legal codes. Some such vindication was a vital ingredient in the outlaw's characterization. For although readers were themselves familiar enough with social and legal injustice to understand and identify with a man whom society had forced into rebellion, they could not condone unprovoked lawlessness.(9)

This justification sweetened Jesse's overly vigorous record. The customary additional justifications were briskly added: That he often righted wrongs and punished criminals; that representatives of law and order behaved even more vilely than Mr. James.

And perhaps most of these qualifications are right, in part. The only problem in matching the fictional Jesse James to the stereotype of the aggrieved hero is that, about twice a novel, he explodes in homicidal frenzy.

As in No. 13, "Jesse James' Revenge; or, The Hold-Up of the Train at Independence."

The story, like mismatched mittens, is in two vaguely associated parts. The first part consists of chase and escape, as if the writer had no particular direction in mind. Jesse and a few of the boys join a posse to capture themselves. When discovered, they capture the posse and use them as targets for some trick shooting.

In this instance, Jesse merely shoots off the knots of the neckerchiefs. More usually, he would notch earlobes with .44 slugs. His shooting is phenomenal with either hand.

Thereafter, they get chased by another posse and hide cleverly. Soon after, they pounce upon four detectives and have a rousing hand-to-hand fight. In the course of which, Jesse goes berserk:

... Jesse sprang to his feet, bounded into the air, landing with terrible force upon the prostrate man's chest, kneeling him.

And as he struck, the crunching of breaking ribs was audible to every one of the wildly struggling men and so sickening was the sound that the others paused in their strife.

The bandit-chieftain had become a fiend incarnate. His face black with rage, his brows beetling, cursing frightfully, he clubbed his guns and rained blow after blow upon his victim's head, disfiguring him beyond recognition. Springing to his feet, he yanked Bixby from off Cole, belaboring him into unconsciousness, then freed Clell from the embrace of his antagonist, finally turning his attention to the man who had so nearly caused his downfall, kicking him till his face resembled a piece of raw beefsteak.

Even his companions were horrified at Jesse's fury and looked on in silence, not daring to interfere.(10)

These murderous frenzies are methodically inserted into the novels. As the series matures, the frenzies grow progressively more brutal. Murder is capped by torture and mutilation and dismemberment, as Jesse rages beyond control.

So terrible was the aspect of the famous desperado as he uttered the awful threat, his ashen-hued face distorted with hatred, his eyes flashing fire, making him seem more like some hideous monster than a human being of flesh and blood, that even his companions unconsciously shrank from him. . . (11)

These two personality elements of the Westbrook Jesse James are never

reconciled. To the end they remain separate, two parallel rivers that mingle no water.

It does seem that Jesse's mood swings are extreme for light fiction.

During the second part of "Jesse James' Revenge," the outlaws make a secret hideout in a cave. They are much bothered by the White Caps (another bunch of night riders like the Black Riders and the Black Wings) and slay armies of them, gun flame bright in the bitter darkness.

Enter new recruit Lem Hawkins and his girl, Sadie Hargis. She is an undercover detective. He is a traitor. After Jesse discovers this, Lem is tortured with red hot irons until his fingers and toes are burnt away. Sadie escapes unharmed—by the code of the West or the squeamishness of dime novel publishers, the James' gang refuses to harm women. Even when they deserve punishment.

So protected by an invisible shield, Sadie steals Jesse's personal treasure. But in the next to the last chapter, he discovers her on the train he is robbing and recovers the lost wealth.

"Jesse James Nemesis; or, The Pinkerton's Oath," No. 15 of the series, is a pivotal novel. It introduces characters right and left, establishes two permanent plot lines, and stirs two dabs of fact into a cauldron of fiction. Again the story has two distinct parts.

PART 1: Jesse is in Kansas City to see his sweetheart and hunt down a traitor. He has a lively time dodging police and Pinkertons and big city crooks. And killing with both hands. Saved from pursuit by the hideous, hunch-backed cripple, Dick the Rat, Jesse is led into the depths of the sewer system. There he witnesses the slaughter of a traitor by Dick and his horrid crew: they cut pieces off the rascal until nothing is left but a rack of bones.

Jesse watches this interesting activity so passively that you have the sensation he has strayed into someone else's story. And perhaps he has. The sequence certainly seems to have been grafted onto the story. It's like finding a shoe in the mashed potatoes—you know it doesn't belong there, even if you don't know where it came from.

Anyhow, Dick the Rat is now established as a series character. He appears in most of the Kansas City stories. He also appears in places where such urban riff-raff rarely visit—moonshiners' mountains and deep Tennessee woods. He arrives when Jesse needs him desperately. He is filled with plot information whispered to him by William Ward. He knows all the secret doors and what the Pinkertons think and where Helen Ormsby has got to this time. Dick is the brace that keeps the whole ramshackle story from collapsing.

Who is Helen Ormsby?

Helen is Jesse's sweetheart. She is fresh, young, clever, and madly intensely in love with Jesse. No matter what they say about him, her love continues. No matter how her father snorts and rages—he is a Kansas City banker, very wealthy—she is Jesse's adored, his girly, his delight.

She may well be the most kidnapped heroine in fiction. Helen exists to be kidnapped. In one story, she gets kidnapped three times by three separate people. Whenever she is kidnapped, Jesse stops killing whomever he is killing at the moment and thunders away. His face is set. He radiates black. Helen is in danger and the world must pause.

Helen is a featured player in the series through No. 42. During all these adventures, no mention is made of Jesse's wife and their merry children. As far as Westbrook publications were concerned, Jesse lived and died a single man. One or two other girls stirred his heart during the series. But he

fought temptation like the noble man he was. He remained true to Helen. And she, defying her father and friends, remained true to Jesse.

All this material is packed into the first eight chapters. The dead bleed all over Kansas City, the Pinkertons are humiliated, and Jesse has carried Helen off to visit in the Missouri backwoods.

PART 2: Pinkerton assigns his best operative, John Whicher, to track the James Boys down. The gang captures him instead. After some pages of graphic torture, Jesse shoots Whicher to death and sends a mocking note, written in the detective's blood, to Pinkerton.

Pinkerton responds with a full-scale attack against Dr. Samuels' cabin, where the James Boys are believed hiding out. They are not. The flaming shell is hurled through the window. The innocent are killed or mutilated. And Jesse gives up all plans to become engaged to Helen. He wants revenge. He wants Pinkerton blood. He will slay and slay and slay until. .

As a later story remarks:

It was the greatest, in fact, the only regret that (Jesse) had in his wild life of crime that the detectives and manhunters would not spare his family in their endeavors to capture him and his brother Frank. And it was his dream that some day his gang should inflict such terrible punishment upon the guardians of law that they would fear again to molest the homestead and its inmates at Kearney.(12)

From this point on, the chronological confusion became incurable. In the world of history, the gang committed sundry bank and train robberies. After they encountered the determined citizens of Northfield, Jesse and Frank headed south to Mexico. There they robbed a silver train, and, the following Spring, routed a Mexican infantry brigade at Monclova in Coahuila. Still later, they shot up a local bandit, Juna Fernando Palacios, for rustling some James cattle.

All these stirring adventures, in and around Mexico, entered "The Adventure Series." But as dismembered chunks, wrenched out of all sequence and fictionalized from hair line to toe nails. The four volumes touching on the Mexican years are:

No. 40: "Jesse James' Silver Trail; or, The Plundering of the Mexican Muleteers" (The event occurred in 1876.)

No. 41: "Jesse James' Ring of Death; or, The Fate of the Texas Rangers" (All events fictional.)

No. 20: "Jesse James' Battle for Freedom; or, The Fight at Monclava" (Occurred 1897 at Monclova, the correct spelling.)

No. 16: "Jesse James' Terrible Raid; or, The Extermination of the Mexican Bandits" (Occurred 1877; Palacios is spelled Palacio.)

The stories blast along packed with attacks, counter-attacks, traps, secret caverns, death traps, torture by fire, gun, knife, and a steady storm of killing as the population of Mexico is significantly reduced.

In No. 16, Jesse secures a magic salve that cures every ill from glanders to gunshot wounds. Marvelous stuff, created by a Mexican witch.

No. 20 is a complicated business in three parts.

During the first portion, it is routine chase and shoot. Jesse escapes from detectives surrounding the Samuels' house. Planning to form a new gang and try it out in Mexico, he recruits tough Sim Dirks. With Frank, they race away to the Missouri River and a series of bloody adventures. In the course of these few chapters, Jesse kills eleven detectives and possemen. A routine adventure.

Now, squarely in the center of the story, occurs a complete interpolated

adventure. Jesse pretends to be Con Morley, the detective, and agrees to investigate weird events in New Orleans. Once there, he untangles a complicated case with many supernatural elements—a ghost train, yellow flowers that turn white, ghosts, watching pictures. . . It is all a plot to steal a million dollar inheritance through a fraudulent marriage.

In his two-part article, "The James Boys in the Saddle Again," J. Edward Leithead remarks that the Westbrook Jesse James novels have a familiar sound. "The style of writing and handling of incidents, to my mind, more resemble the work of St. George Rathborne and T. W. Hanshew, authors of the Log Cabin 'James Boys' novels. . ." (13) The New Orleans interpolation in "Adventure Series" No. 20 certainly sounds like Hanshew. It includes all those supernatural trappings that Hanshew liked to drag into a story, then explode casually. A familiar Hanshew device appears when Jesse sprinkles powder about to see if a supernatural creature leaves tracks—just as Cleek, the Man of Forty Faces, might have done.

At any moment, you expect Jesse to writhe his face into new features.

That Hanshew wrote the New Orleans material mentioned here is certainly possible. That the material was published elsewhere and revised for Jesse James No. 20 is also possible. Particularly since the New Orleans situation differs in style from the violence-oriented narrative of the first and third parts.

But we really don't know. Until the Westbrook editorial records are located and studied, any attribution of authorship is simply guesswork. Leithead is correct: The prose resembles the work of Rathborne and Hanshew. Beyond noting that resemblance, we should not go. (14)

The final part of "Jesse James' Battle for Freedom" takes place in a Texas border town. While there, cleaning up the final strands of the New Orleans case, Jesse meets Con Morley. Then follows a wonderful saloon fight. Morley gets his jaw broken and, before the guns cool, the James Boys have killed fifteen more.

In the now obligatory torture scene, Jesse seeks information from a prisoner. Then the boys go into action against the Mexican army, kill about twenty, and retreat to the States.

Around this time, you realize that Jesse James has become fiction's most efficient killing machine. During No. 22, "Jesse James' Bluff; or, The Escape of the Chinese Highbinders," Jesse and company commit eighty-two killings, including Black Riders, Pinkertons, and assorted detectives and Tong members.

The carnival begins when a detective discovers the James Boys' secret cave and steals their treasure. To recover the fortune, Jesse (slightly aided by Frank and others).

- fights free of a flaming cabin, slaughtering his captors
- traps a 21-man posse in the cave and kills them all.

At this point, Sheriff Bud Hopkins slaps Jesse's mother and calls Jesse a coward. Before the wretch is punished, Jesse

- traps 17 Black Riders in a barn that burns to the ground
- ambushes a huge posse and guns it to pieces
- loads a captured Pinkerton with dynamite, ties him to a telephone pole, and explodes him with a rifle bullet
- guns down Sheriff Hopkins in a public courtroom duel.

After these stirring exploits, the gang heads toward St. Louis. Along the way, they

- obliterate a 4-man posse

—murder a gambler on a riverboat and hijack the riverboat.

When they arrive in St. Louis, police, Pinkertons, and detectives die by the score. Between murders, Jesse finds time to

—execute a traitor to the gang

—steal a Tong treasure concealed in an opium joint, while blasting Chinese killers to their doom.

How furiously the savage action rages.

The outlaws are trapped. By a clever trick, they slide away. Only to be surrounded by armies of men. As they fight free, Jesse is creased by a bullet, captured, tied up tight. Or some cowardly mutt slugs him from behind. But no one is clever enough to check Jesse's boots, each concealing a Bowie knife. In moments he is free, cursing horribly—slashing and shooting—splashed with blood—his face distorted.

No one may strike Jesse James and live.

No one may fire at Jesse James and get away with his life.

No one may strike Jesse James' mother or Jesse James' sister or steal Jesse James' sweetheart or injure Jesse James' horse. No one may sneer at Jesse James, steal his treasure, poke about his home, ride against him, talk about him, scowl or laugh near him, be a banker, be a Pinkerton.

Jesse James will not tolerate it.

The Bowie flashes and is dripping red. The heavy Colt thunders. The iron fist strikes home a terrible blow.

The James Boys never forgive or forget an insult. And anything can be an insult. Anything at all.

The death machine that is Jesse James rides killing through backwoods Missouri. Strides killing through Kansas City streets. Drifts killing down through Texas to Massacre in Mexico and slaughter in Colorado. To gouge out eyes in Iowa, and split tongues in Kansas, and decapitate in Missouri. And kill, and kill again, and again kill.

All for the entertainment and pleasure of the reader.

By some miracle, the stories work. For all their shallow violence and lack of direction, in spite of melodrama and dramatic cliches, stereotypes, coincidence, lack of characterization, rabid inhumanity, they suck the reader along. Chapters hurtle past. The suspense would bend metal. Jesse James, that terrible outlaw, towers colossal. No man can trap him. If caught by bad luck, he cannot be held.

—Into the glowing bed of coals, he thrusts his bound hands

—Bloody wounds streaming, he slashes down the Bowie

—Tied hand and foot, he squirms to the cliff edge and hurls himself into space.

"Jesse James' Wild Night; or, The Wrecking of the Rock Island Train" (No. 23) tells how he seeks to save a kidnapped girl. At the end, he fails. Her death is avenged in blood.

The violent events of "Jesse James' Brutal Shot; or, The Murder in the Gallatin Bank" (No. 24) are again divided between town and country. The town is Kansas City, where Jesse comes to see Helen and ends putting holes in many citizens. The Pinkertons try but accomplish little. Pinkerton Superintendent Dillaby ends slugged and tied up in his own home, while Jesse flies down the street in Dillaby's coach with Dillaby's wife at his side, brightly interested. Helen, the cause of all this commotion, has been kidnapped again

During the country portion of the story, a posse is repeatedly outwitted and shot to ribbons.

In No. 25, "Jesse James' Daylight Foray; or, The Looting of the Bank at Corydon, Iowa," a woman overhears Jesse's plans to rob a bank. He chases her and a posse chases him and it is eighteen chapters of hares and hounds and gory excesses.

In "Jesse James' Mistake; or, Foiled By Death" (No. 28), Helen gets kidnapped twice running. After saving her the second time, Jesse confronts Father Ormsby with a demand for Helen's hand—on the solid ground that the old man doesn't know how to protect her.

But Banker Ormsby flatly refuses. He intends to ship Helen off to Europe, where she will forget her infatuation with a common criminal. After she returns, she will wed wealthy young Dick Martin.

This admirable plan is immediately spoiled. Jesse rides to Martin's bank and shoots him dead. It is an ill-timed gesture. For only Martin knew the combination to the vault, now locked fast and invulnerable.

"Jesse James' Ruse; or, The Mystery of the Two Highwaymen" (No. 30) contains a bit of this, a bit of that. Fights with detectives and man-hunters in Kearney and Kansas. Then off to meet Homely Harry in Colorado, where Wild Bill (one of Jesse's boys) rides an unbreakable horse and everyone robs a stage coach. They get the money Indians received for a land sale.

The Indians promptly lead the bandits into an ambush. After a long chase, the Indians almost have them, but Jesse fires the prairie grass in the nick of time.

The bandits then rob another stage twice, pretending to be ghosts, and great is the hilarity. Particularly when Jesse decides to scare six prisoners by making them dig their own graves. At the last moment, troopers appear and Jesse is forced to kill all six. But at least their graves were prepared. It wasn't as if he just shot them and left them there.

Those readers who enjoy stylistic curiosities may note that, in this novel, Dr. Samuels' house is referred to as "Castle James." Another stylistic puzzle is Jesse's use of the exclamation "By Jove," a choice of words singularly inappropriate for a backwood Missouri boy. (The exclamation is also used in Nos. 20 and 28).(15)

One of the stranger stories of the series is No. 33, "Jesse James' Daring Joke; or, The Kidnapping of a Bank President." The bank president is almost incidental. He is banker Perkins of St. Joseph, who has had the bad judgment to hire Bud Simpkins and his White Caps to get Jesse. Discovering that enemies surround the Castle James, Mrs. Samuels dresses Jesse in a calf skin. He moves out through them, killing as he goes, and almost escapes. Except that he falls and knocks himself out. The White Caps capture and torture him and treat him mean. But he escapes, blowing up half their force. Presently he is trapped in a flaming cabin, from which he escapes by falling into a mountain.

Meanwhile, Bud carries off Mrs. Samuels. She is tortured to make her tell where Frank is. When her captors relax their guard, she uses pressure on neck nerves to subdue a tough killer, then chokes him to death with her single arm. Upset by her behavior, Bud drags her off to a cave and burns her feet with candles.

About this time, Jesse works out of the mountain into the cave and the slaughter is just splendid. Bud escapes, but not for long. Jesse has the satisfaction of smashing out the fiend's brains by bashing his head against a tree.

As an afterthought, he rides over to St. Joe, lures off banker Perkins.

After robbing him of \$10,000, Jess lodges him in jail, telling everyone that Perkins is really Jesse James. Joke.

"Jesse James' Narrow Escape; or, Ensnared By a Woman Detective" (No. 36) is another town and country adventure. Jesse saves a banker's beautiful daughter from a flaming house and is lionized and made much over. However, a woman Pinkerton suspects his true identity and plots to expose him. The action is smoothly intricate and several of the characters, including the banker and his daughter, are nicely drawn. They are also sympathetic to Jesse, even when he reveals his true identity.

Then the story veers out into the country, where they ride and shoot and holler along the Missouri River.

Helen returns in "Jesse James' Surprise; or, The Looting of the Huntingdon Bank" (No. 38). First Jesse saves her (and her crafty father) from a train wreck. Then she is kidnapped by an old mountain boy who demands a ransom. Jesse is on her trail but is captured by Pinkertons and only escapes by tumbling over a cliff. Meanwhile, Helen has been carried off to a cave. She beans her captor with a flaming lamp and escapes and is caught and escapes and falls over a cliff to land right beside Jesse. And away they wander hand in hand. Eventually Jesse gets her back to Kansas City, where he has a violent scene with old man Ormsby and departs, unsettled in mind.

Those are Chapters 1 through 20. Chapter 21 covers the robbery of the Huntingdon Bank, which seems tossed in as an afterthought to add verisimilitude to this bland and unconvincing narrative.

Even the most delightful pleasures fade at last. The Jesse James series nears its conclusion. Off stage, Bob Ford fingers his pistol and, onstage, the mysterious Man In Black spreads his ebon cape and glides, silent and terrible, from place to place, his eyes fixed on Jesse.

It is told in No. 42, "Jesse James' Mysterious Foe; or, The Pursuit of the Man in Black." This sinister figure dogs Jesse everywhere, causing him to scowl and shuffle his feet. After a series of violent adventures in St. Louis, Jesse is captured. But don't be distressed. He promptly escapes and races handcuffed through the city, blasting down police right and left.

Only to find that Helen has been, er, well, kidnapped, is what's happened to her. She writes a letter saying that shes being held in Kentucky.

Off Jesse goes, with Frank, to rescue her.

Now follows a train hold-up, a fight with the bandits, a plunge from a train traveling 60 mph, and excursions up and down the line. Is Frank dead? Is Jesse dead? Finally the boys steal a complete train and arrive in Kentucky, only to discover that Helen is not there at all.

This part of the story is so weakly inept it fairly screams revision of another story. A note from Dick the Rat calls Jesse back to St. Louis. There, in a scene stiff and contrived and touching, all at the same time, Helen breaks off with Jesse:

Helen: "... you and I must part. Believe me, Jess, it almost breaks my heart to have to say it, but our friendship is bringing us both misery."

JJ: "Friendship! You call it friendship?"

Helen: "Yes, but I know it is much more. This terrible strain is wrecking my life and sooner or later your love for me is going to bring you to an imprudence that will cost you your life. . ."

JJ: "You have ceased to love me. . ."

Helen: "You know that is not the case. I love you too well. It is that love that imperils your life every time you seek to see me. . It is because of your love that the authorities came to know that you were here."

Please don't make it any harder for me than it is. My heart is nearly broken. Good-bye, Jess.'

JJ: "And am I to see you no more?"

Helen: "No more, please, Jess. The clouds will never drift away. I feel it. The feeling oppresses me. I have the presentiment that we shall never see each other again."(16)

She leaves. Jesse collapses into a chair. And at that moment he learns that Helen was saved from the kidnappers by The Man In Black—who is Jeff Clayton. "Better known as Jeff The Inscrutable, the world's most famous detective."

"Good God!" murmurs Jesse James.

Now our revels are almost ended. Insensibly the accomplished outlaw gang has dispersed. Cole Younger has gone, and all his brothers, and tough Clell Miller. Comanche Tony and Texas Jack have melted into the western sunset. Sam Dirks has vanished, and Jim White, and wiry Wild Bill, that horse-riding terror.

Pinkerton Superintendent Dillaby will come no more. Nor William Pinkerton, himself, nor Con Morley. Helen Ormsby and her father face a new life, far away. Slow-moving, ineffectual Dr. Samuels is gone. John Edwards and Jack Crawford, both of the "Kansas City Times," both staunch James supporters, have helped Jesse trick the detectives for the last time. Dick the Rat slips secretly into his favorite sewer, his eyes hot in the fetid gloom.

A new sun rises. Over the forests and cliffs, the dirt roads and drowsy backwoods towns of Jesse James country, glows the new sun of Jeff Clayton.

Golden and terrible he blazes. Already he stars in a serial tucked at the back of the "Old Sleuth Weekly." (Chapter One appeared in the April 1, 1910, issue.) Published in innumerable parts, the serial was titled "Jeff Clayton's Strange Quest; or, The Trail of a Ghost." Presently Jeff Clayton novels will march through "The Adventure Series," beginning with No. 44, "Jeff Clayton's Lost Clue; or, The Mystery of the Wireless Murder." By William Ward, of course.

Thirty-four Jeff Clayton titles will be published, spread across perhaps four years. The Jesse James series has stopped at last—barring a scatter of "Adventure Series" reprints around 1915.(18) Or perhaps something more remains to be discovered. With the James Boys, you are never quite sure.

The final Jesse James adventure in the series was No. 43, "Jesse James' Fate; or, The End of the Crimson Trail." It is nineteen chapters, 172 pages of scraps. It consists of four separate stories, lightly mashed together, plus some miscellaneous incidents that are too short for stories and too long for vignettes.

Action begins, as usual, at Dr. Samuels' home. The Black Wings raid but fail to capture Jesse. They never learned. He kills a stack of them and, with Frank, goes thundering away.

Unfortunately, Satan pulls a tendon. The outlaws are forced to hide in a graveyard and, for several chapters, it's fun among the headstones. The posse members search the graveyard and are tricked and scared and clubbed and shot down. It's quite humorous, really it is. Particularly if you ain't read hardly no books.

Enraged by this constant pursuit, Jesse vows to leave a crimson trail across Missouri that the state will long remember. And off they go.

They arrive in Abingdon, a town Jesse judges to be too sleepy and too slow. For the next three chapters, he turns the place sideways. He forces

them to observe Sunday as Saturday, drives the whole town to bathe in the mill pond, scares all the men into sliding down the mill flume. These merry exercises, enforced by fist and pistol, halt when the minister's sweet little innocent daughter begs Jesse to let church service begin. After which the James Boys enforce 100% attendance at church and lavish contributions to the church collection.

From Abington, they ride to more adventure. They attend a dance that ends in a gun fight. Save a girl from a pushy suitor. Get chased by a horde of howling cowboys. Trapped in a flaming field, Jesse hollows out a dead horse and hides inside until the fire passes. Next he joins a circus, steals their receipts, and escapes in a balloon. When the balloon sags into the Mississippi, he boards a passing steamboat—is almost captured by Jeff Clayton—escapes—flees to St. Joseph.

And, two days later, is shot and killed by Bob Ford.

No sooner does Jesse fall dead, than a black-clad form plunges smashing through the window. Two shots roar out. The Ford boys' guns are blown from their hands.

Jeff Clayton has arrived, only a few seconds late.

The Jesse James series is over.

The Jeff Clayton series begins.

The inexorable making of fiction continues down the years.

The Westbrook Jesse James adventures are strangely flawed, built of mud and flowers. They are primitive as Devonian rock.

The James Boys and their outlaw band, known historical characters, pillaged for fifteen years and were dispersed. That documented reality is the least part of these adventures. The Jesse James of "The Adventure Series" is no real character. He exceeds reality. He has become myth, speaking as myth speaks, to grave elements of the human experience—of love and hunger and death, revenge and fortitude.

From this basic stone, the series derives its power. As fiction, it is rudely unpolished. As myth, it is vividly strong, the proper food of ghosts, as the ghost of Jesse James might tell you.

Footnotes

1. Carl W. Breihan, "The Complete and Authentic Life of Jesse James," Collier Books (1962), p. 58. See also p. 72, quoting a Jesse James letter concerning the Pinkerton attack. The biographical material used in this article is based on Breihan's book.
2. Bob Younger died in prison. Cole and Jim were parolled in 1901.
3. J. Edward Leithead, "The James Boys in the Saddle Again," "Dime Novel Round-Up," Vol. 24, No. 4, Whole No. 283 (April 15, 1956), p. 30.
4. Reasons for cancellation of the Jesse James dime novels are not clear. E. F. Bleiler, in his "Introduction" to "Eight Dime Novels," NY: Dover, 1974, p. x, remarks that "Street and Smith cancelled its Jesse James series, when it seemed that public opinion was against the outlaws and their deeds." No publisher would risk too much public outcry for fear of cancellation of some portion of his second-class mailing privileges. Altruism is the public fact of private fears for the bank account.
5. In this series, names are consistently off, just a little. Thus, Dr. and Mrs. Samuel become Samuels, Jesse's half-brother Archie becomes Johnny, Quantrill becomes Quantrell, and Alan Pinkerton becomes his son William.
6. William Ward, "Jesse James' Revenge; or, The Hold-Up of the Train at

- Independence," "The Adventure Series," No. 13, p. 8.
7. Ibid, p. 11.
 8. William Ward, "Jesse James' Narrow Escape; or, Ensnared By a Woman Detective," "The Adventure Series" No. 36, pp. 85-86.
 9. Daryl Jones, "The Dime Novel Western," Bowling Green Popular Press, 1978, p. 96.
 10. Ward, "Jesse James' Revenge," pp. 74-75.
 11. Ibid, pp. 158-159.
 12. Ward, "Jesse James' Battle For Freedom," p. 12.
 13. Leithead, op. cit, p. 26.
 14. In the opinion of this commentator, many of these Jesse James novels include material extracted from other sources and revised for "The Adventure Series." To this date, however, no specific sources have been identified. It does no harm to point out that an opinion, unsubstantiated by fact, is also called a guess.
 15. Those fascinated by pretty coincidence may note that Frank James expostulates "By Jove" in "Frank James on the Trail," "Morrison's Sensational Series," Vol. 1 No. 46 (July 1, 1882), reprinted in E. F. Bleiler's "Eight Dime Novels."
 16. Ward, "Jesse James' Mysterious Foe; or, The Pursuit of the Man in Black" (No. 42), pp. 171-172.
 17. Edward LeBlanc has pointed out that the Jeff Clayton novels in "The Adventure Series" were reprints of Sexton Blake stories from the English "Union Jack." Clayton's brief appearances in the final two Jesse James novels were original. He appears infrequently and ineffectually, his presence serving mainly to prepare for the next "Adventure" series.
 18. Leithead, op. cit., p. 30.

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The Man Who Loved The West

By Jack Schorr

EDWIN LEGRAND SABIN, 1870-1952

He was born December 23, 1870 in Rockford, Ill., the son of Henry Sabin who was superintendent of schools, and Esther Frances Sabin. Edwin had one brother Elbridge Hosmer Sabin. About his birthday, Edwin says, "I did not choose the date. It was so near Christmas that my birthday presents served as Christmas presents. I should not advise anyone to be born at Christmas time." In 1871 at the age of 1, his family moved to Clinton, Iowa, where his father became superintendent of schools. In that old time river town Edwin learned many things with the Tom Sawyers and the Huckleberry Finns about steam boats, sawmills, log rafts, fishing, hunting, swimming and camping. He had many adventures on the log rafts he and his companions built. These adventures gave a rich background to Sabin's books scenes. He drew heavily on his own experiences with nature in the great outdoors that made his books authentic and interesting. In 1888 he started attending University of Iowa and graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1892. He gained writing experience from the variety of jobs on newspaper staffs in Iowa and Illinois as reporter and as city editor. In May he went on an expedition to the Bahama Islands with a group from the University and he was fascinated with the sea life there.

His public writing, aside from newspapers, began by writing prose and verse for magazines which was quite good and readily accepted. On October 7, 1896 he married Mary Caroline Nash. A few years after his marriage he decided to quit the steady newspapers jobs and gamble on free lance writing career and he began publishing in the best and most popular magazines.

In 1905 his second children's book was published by T. Y. Crowell, "Beaufort Chums." This started a long and rewarding partnership. Satisfying a strong urge to write about the West, Sabin decided to move West, first he went to Denver, and in 1911 to San Diego. In 1913 he settled in La Jolla, California. The years 1913-1931 were his fruitful years and he perfected his writing craft. It was during this time he wrote that fine series, The Trail Blazers Series published by Lippincott and his famous Bar B Boys and others published by Crowell. These are the books that I knew him for and loved. He did such a splendid job as writer of Western stories for boys. This was the work of a skillful craftsman as anyone can attest who read them.

Then came the lean years, and lean indeed. In 1931, the stock market crash which hurt him. He had to give up writing book length novels and needed to write shorter manuscripts for ready cash. He found this market was badly shot too. In 1931 economics forced the Sabins to move from La Jolla to Hemet, California, which is inland. He wrote "How-to" pamphlets for a writing correspondence course for budding writers, but that failed. Things were tough for him. In 1941 his net income from his miscellaneous writings was only \$675.41. His total royalties in 1943 from all his books with Lippincott was \$113.13. In an effort to increase income Sabin published a few stories under the name of W. H. Asper and Yoric Scott. His manuscripts were always so neat and orderly through the years. This he emphasized to the budding writers, yet a story he submitted when he was in his 70's was rejected with a terse notation that it was too short and the copy too difficult to read. How different that was from an earlier period when Sabin received a thousand dollars as first prize for his "The Song of Roland" published in Outdoor Recreation in November, 1922.

Then another setback when in November, 1946 a Crowell edition, the publishers he did business with for years, returned a manuscript entitled "This Land of Ours," saying, "Unfortunately we feel the material is too crammed with facts and too artificial to warrant its publication. He didn't hang on to his manuscripts after they went into print. He destroyed them, so he was unable to donate them to the University of Iowa, who desired them. His health began to fail. He broke his hip in February, 1952. In September, 1952, his wife died, and he accepted aid from welfare. In November, 1952 he again fell and broke a hip and was hospitalized. He died November 24, 1952, a ward of the county. This was a sad ending of this brilliant man who put so much into his books. I always felt Sabin never received full credit for his skill as a master story teller. I have been unable to ascertain why.

The following is a list of his writings, juvenile and adult:

"Trail Blazers" series, all illustrated by Charles H. Stephens and published by Lippincott, except as noted:

With Carson and Fremont: Being the Adventures, in the Years 1842-'43-'44, (1912).

On the Plains with Custer: The Western Life and Deeds of the Chief with the Yellow Hair, (1913).

Buffalo Bill and the Overland Trail, (1914).

Gold Seekers of '49, (1915).

With Sam Houston in Texas: A Boy Volunteer in the Texas Struggles for Independence, (1916).

Opening the West with Lewis and Clark, (1917).

General Crook and the Fighting Apaches, (1918).

Lost with Lieutenant Pike, (1919).

Into Mexico with General Scott, (1920).

With George Washington into the Wilderness (illustrated by Will Thompson), (1924).

In the Ranks of Old Hickory (illustrated by Frank Eltonhead), (1927).

Klondike Pardners: Wherein Are Told the Haps and Mishaps of Two Fortune-Seekers (illustrated by Lyle Justis), (1929).

FICTION:

The Magic Mashie and Other Goldfish Stories, A. Wessels, (1902).

Beaufort Chums (illustrated by Charles Copeland), Crowell, (1905).

When You Were a Boy (illustrated by Frederic Dorr Steele), Baker & Taylor, (1905).

Bar B Boys: or, The Young Cow-Punchers, Crowell, (1909).

Range and Trail: or, The Bar B's Great Drive, Crowell, (1910).

The Circle K: or, Fighting for the Flock, Crowell, (1911).

Old Four-Toes: or, Hunters of the Peaks, Crowell, (1912).

Pluck on the Long Trail: or, Boy Scouts in the Rockies (illustrated by Clarence H. Rowe), Crowell, (1912).

Treasure Mountain: or, The Young Prospectors, Crowell, (1913).

Scarface Ranch: or, The Young Homesteaders, Crowell, (1914).

The Boy Settler: or, Terry in the New West, Crowell, (1916).

How Are You Feeling Now? (illustrated by Tony Sarg), Little, Brown, (1917).

The Great Pike's Peak Rush: or, Terry in the New Gold Fields, Crowell, (1917).

On the Overland Stage: or, Terry as a King Whip Cub, Crowell, (1918).

Opening the Iron Trail: or, Terry as a "U Pay" Man, Crowell, (1919).
 Desert Dust (illustrated by J. Clinton Shepherd), G. W. Jacobs, 1922.
 The Rose of Santa Fe, G. W. Jacobs, (1923).
 The City of the Sun, G. W. Jacobs, (1924).
 White Indian, G. W. Jacobs, (1925).
 Rio Bravo: A Romance of the Texas Frontier, Macrae Smith, (1926).
 "Old" Jim Bridger on the Moccasin Trail: A Tale of the Beaver West, Crowell, 1928.
 Gold! A tale of Great and Romantic Adventurings by Argonauts (illustrated by Charles Hargens Jr.), Macrae Smith, 1929.
 Mississippi River Boy (illustrated by M. J. Gallagher), Lippincott, 1932.
 Pirate Waters: A Story of the Old Navy (illustrated by Lind Ward), Lippincott, 1941.

NON FICTION:

(With Father, Henry Sabin) The Making of Iowa, A. Flanagan, 1900.
 Kit Carson Days: 1809-1868, McClurg, 1914.
 Revised edition published as Kit Carson Days, 1809-1868.
 Adventures in the Path of Empire (illustrated by Howard Simon Simon) Press of the Pioneers, 1935.
 Boys Book of Indian Warriors and Heroic Indian Women, G. W. Jacobs, 1918.
 Boys Book of Frontier Fighters, G. W. Jacobs, 1919.
 Building the Pacific Railway, Lippincott, 1919.
 Boys' Book of Border Battles, G. W. Jacobs, 1920.
 Wild Men of the Wild West, Crowell, 1920, reprinted, Books for Libraries 1972.

SOURCE: Some of the above information was obtained from "Cumulative Book Index; Yesterdays Authors of Children's Books; and Junior Book of Authors."

Two Nice Sets

SECRET SERVICE. The Bradys. Early 1920s, some pub. by Tousey, others by Wolff. Edges brown and ragged—left out in the sun too long I guess. Insides seem to be better condition, don't seem to be brittle. Nice cover illustrations. About 25, I think well worth \$25 postpaid.

OLD SLEUTH'S OWN. Ogilvie Pub. Co., copyright 1896 Parlor Car Pub. Co. Odd numbers up to about #125. I'd say good condition, paper a little brown but no brittleness. 25 copies, \$25 postpaid.

Wish I had the time to read them, Old Sleuth especially was my favorite in my youth. Maybe I won't sell 'em!

H. W. Miller (ye Roundup printer), 821 Vermont St., Lawrence, Kans. 66044
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I have 7 volumes of a series of books printed in Paris around 1750 (in French of course) on explorations and travels—Marco Polo and others, the Tartars, Mongols, Java, Africa, etc. No, or few, plates. Make a cash offer or will donate to a library or similar for a reasonable tax deduction.

LETTERS

Dear Ed,

I was indeed delighted to meet Judy Seddon Barton recently. She presented an unusual opportunity to share a part of her father with all members of HAS through the "Newsboy" and at the recent Alger Convention. Her intent in making her father's collection of valuable and rare titles available to fellow collectors was well received by all. I thank her, once again, for that opportunity!

The excitement and genuine interest generated by each participating individual through written bids and/or in person at the auction further verified this. This proved to be an excellent way of disposing of a private collection of this type. The collection then remains in the hands of "collectors" who well appreciate the value; and, hopefully, will keep these titles available sooner or later for other present and future collectors. It provides a financial resource for those inheriting or for those disposing of a collection privately without the involvement of various outside sources. It is an avenue of finding just the right "home," at the right "time," and for the right "price."

All this enthusiasm and excitement has been drastically dampened and the ability to purchase books at reasonable prices has been damaged by the total lack of discretion used in both the "Newsboy" and the "Dime Novel Roundup." My overwhelming disappointment lies in the fact that a LISTING was published. And, once published, the listing of each book with the dollar value WAS NOT followed by any further individual description as noted with the pre-auction material. There certainly are better ways of passing on these auction results to those interested parties that were directly involved.

Now every book collector, book dealer, antiquarian and librarian will declare their copy of ANY published Alger book to be of the same value if not more, regardless of state or condition. It has already happened to me in my dealings this past week with three individuals who just happened to read these two publications. What happens now when this poorly presented material is passed on (as it already has) to book and antique dealers, as well as book collectors, who often, through no fault of theirs, misinterpret and misjudge the overall condition and state of a book? The long term effect is yet untold. The goose that laid the golden egg has been cooked! We, avid but humble collectors, will be priced out of the market place when trying to add to or upgrade our collections. Understandably, on the other side of the coin, we all would like to receive full dollar value for our books but we must all bear in mind that only TOP condition will bring TOP money for our collections, even for those rare and hard to find titles.

Our field of collecting does not need any more misinformation. We, above all others, must and should present information on our field of interest in an intelligent, useful, knowledgeable fashion or we will destroy the art, the challenge, and the fun of buying, selling and collecting books.

The efforts undertaken in the task to evaluate and list the Seddon collection stated that Judy Seddon Barton's privacy be protected. These efforts failed, as apparently no consideration was given to the responsibility of respecting her privacy AFTER the auction. In disposing of my collection, I certainly would strongly object to the publication of such detailed dollar information, but that is a total matter of personal choice which should be taken into account by each individual at the time of disposing of a collection.

The excitement of a dream come true has been turned into a bad dream by the lack of judgment, intelligence, and devotion which were laid aside in a rare moment of HAS history. Let's not forget the obligation to all Par-

ticular Friends to encourage the spirit of "Strive and Succeed" and to take a closer look at self preservation with respect for fellow collectors and especially for future collectors to come. Pricing ourselves out of the marketplace certainly defeats the dreams of such individuals as Forrest Campbell and Ken Butler. I truly believe that they meant this society to be enjoyed by ALL individuals who are from ALL walks of life, young and old, rich or poor, and that we all be able to pursue an interest with the same enthusiasm as any one of Alger's heroes would have.

To be able to walk into an old New England bookstore and find an elusive copy of "Bertha's Christmas Vision" or, any other difficult title for that matter, for \$5.00 is still the dream of every collector. Let's try to keep it that way!

Sincerely, Hank Gravbelle

NEWS NOTES

Yellowback Library, #22 July/August 1984 contains articles on series books Beverly Gray, Juvenile Soap, by John E. Abreu; a report on the Series Book convention held in LaCrosse, Wis. in June; Perry Lane and the Secret of the Pyramid by Joseph Ruttar and another excellent column about series books by Bob Chenu.

The Mystery and Adventure Review #14 contains The Politics of Boys' Sports Novels, by Jim O'Brien, The Complete Collector's Hardy Boys Formats, by Cliff Erickson; The West Point Series, by I. R. Ybarra; Connie Blair by Don Holbrook. All worth the reading.

Both these magazines are highly recommended. The Yellowback Library is \$8.00 a year published by Gil O'Gara, 811 Boulder Ave., Des Moines, Iowa 50315. The Mystery and Adventures Review is \$5.00 for 4 quarterly issues. P. O. Box 3488, Tucson, Ariz. 85722.

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